Updated

Critical Incident Policy

for

Scoil Íosagáin CBS

19/09/2024

Introduction

At Scoil Íosagáin CBS, we aim to protect the well-being of our pupils and staff by providing a safe and caring environment. This **Critical Incident Policy** aligns with the **Education Act 1998**, **Education (Welfare) Act 2000**, and the **Health and Safety Regulations** in Ireland, as well as our school's ethos and **Code of Behaviour**.

This policy outlines the steps the school will take to manage and respond to a critical incident, which is defined as any event that overwhelms the school's normal coping mechanisms and disrupts its functioning.

What is a Critical Incident?

A **critical incident** is any event or sequence of events that has the potential to cause extreme distress to the school community. Examples include:

- Death or major illness of a student or staff member
- Serious injury or accident
- Sudden traumatic events, such as a suicide or violent crime
- Natural disasters
- Civil unrest affecting staff or students from conflict zones
- Fire or significant damage to the school
- Missing students or unauthorised removal of a student

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

The **Board of Management (BoM)** has established a **Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)** to manage and respond to critical incidents. This team will:

- Ensure the safety and welfare of all students and staff
- Manage communications with stakeholders
- Provide ongoing support and recovery for those affected

Critical Incident Management Team Roles:

- **Leadership Role**: Principal (Denis Barry)
- **Communication Role**: Deputy Principal (Leah Walsh)

- **Student Liaison/Counselling Role**: Principal (Denis Barry)
- **Chaplaincy Role**: Ann O'Grady/Deirdre O'Rourke
- **Family Liaison Role**: Thomas Liddy
- **Parents Association Representative**: [To be nominated]
- **Board of Management Representative**: Niamh Fitzgerald

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Leadership Role (Principal):

- Confirm the critical incident
- Activate the CIMT
- Liaise with emergency services
- Lead briefings for staff on known facts
- Express sympathy to affected families
- Communicate key information to staff, students, and external stakeholders
- Coordinate memorial or support events

2. Communication Role (Deputy Principal):

- Prepare public statements in coordination with the CIMT
- Manage communications with media and the wider community
- Ensure the school's telephone lines are free for critical communications

3. Student Liaison/Counselling Role:

- Identify vulnerable students and staff and provide support
- Implement referral procedures for counselling or other interventions
- Provide staff with necessary resources and guidelines to support students

4. Chaplaincy Role:

- Provide spiritual support to the school community
- Organise prayer services, if appropriate
- Assist families with religious ceremonies

5. Family Liaison Role:

- Coordinate communication between the school and families of those affected
- Assist with arrangements for school participation in funerals or memorial services
- Connect families with external support services

Action Plan

Short-Term Actions (Day 1):

- Contact families immediately and offer support
- Provide a quiet space for students and staff affected
- Issue a media statement and protect family privacy
- Liaise with emergency and support services, including:

    - **Emergency services**
    - **Health Service Executive (HSE)**
    - **National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)**

Medium-Term Actions (24-72 Hours):

- Prepare students and staff for attending funerals or memorials
- Facilitate expressions of sympathy from students and staff (e.g., cards, Book of Condolences)
- Hold support meetings for staff, students, and parents as needed
- Monitor the well-being of those most affected and provide additional support
- Plan visits to injured students or staff in coordination with the family

Longer-Term Actions:

- Continue monitoring students and staff for signs of distress and refer them to external support services if necessary
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the school's response and update the Critical Incident Policy accordingly
- Mark anniversaries or special dates that may trigger emotional responses in affected students or staff

Policy Review and Evaluation

The **Critical Incident Management Team** will regularly review and update the policy, taking into account feedback from staff, parents, and external professionals such as NEPS. The plan will also be updated based on experiences from any incidents that occur.

Key Review Questions:

- What went well during the incident response?
- Were there any gaps in the response?
- What could be improved for future responses?

Communication and Record-Keeping

All communication during a critical incident will follow **Data Protection Guidelines** as per the **Data Protection Act 2018**. Records of actions taken during the incident will be kept securely and reviewed as part of the policy evaluation process.

Conclusion

This policy is designed to ensure that Scoil Íosagáin is fully prepared to respond to critical incidents in a manner that protects the well-being of its students and staff, while complying with all relevant Irish legislation and educational guidelines.